This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

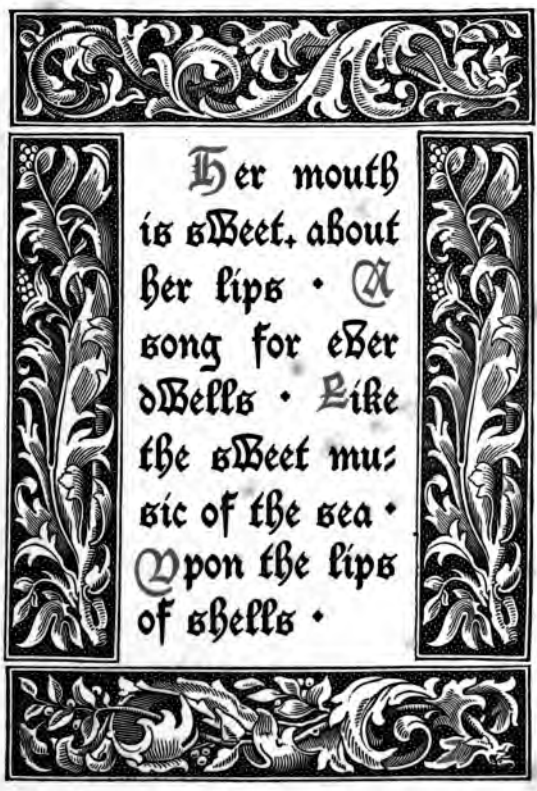
+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

The Murmur of the Shells.


Her mouth
is sweet, about
her lips · A
song for ever
dwells · Like
the sweet mu:
sic of the sea ·
Upon the lips
of shells ·

BELFAST

The Murmur of the Shells.

BY

SAMUEL K. COWAN,

Author of "POEMS" *(Smith, Elder & Co.)*

Belfast:

M'Caw, Stevenson & Orr,

LINENHALL WORKS.

LONDON:
GEORGE BELL & SONS,
YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN.

1879.

EDINBURGH & GLASGOW:
JOHN MENZIES & CO.

280 j. 607.

PRINTED BY
McCAW STEVENSON & ORR
BELFAST
No 5573

DEDICATION.

TO

ROBERT YELVERTON TYRRELL,

FELLOW OF TRINITY COLLEGE,

DUBLIN,

EDITOR OF "KOTTABOS,"

AND

PRINCE OF SCHOLARS,

THIS VOLUME

IS

ADMIRINGLY AND GRATEFULLY

INSCRIBED.

Contents.

	PAGE
Might have been	1
A Bouquet of Flowers	4
Becalmed	6
One Yule-Tide's Tale	11
In the Mirror	16
The Voice of the Wind	19
So Cruelly Meek	20
Old Love-Letters	22
Sabbath Chimes	24
Old Year's Night	26
A Christmas Carol	28
Lines on Re-visiting School	30
Up the Avenue	34
For Dead Love's Sake	35
Found Drowned	36
The Old Sweet Story	40
At Lilac Hill	42
My Choice	45
An Arm-Chair Doze	46
One Love Alone	51
In the Firelight	52
All's Well	53
Hallowe'en	55
A New-Year's Dream	57
Yule-Bells	59
Lunatic Love	63

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
A World Apart	65
The Suicide	66
Fly Away, O, White Dove, Away	68
My Lady's Grave	69
Guinevere to Lancelot	72
Golden Tresses	74
New-Years's Eve	75
One Face	76
Asleep	78
A Sabbath Morn	79
My Love-Bird	80
Sonnets—	
Under the Lilacs	83
A Love Dream	84
My Marriage Morn	85
After Marriage	86
Unchanged	87
In the Garden	88
My Love, My Rose	9
Fêlise	91
Pilgrimage	92
My Darling's Dream	93
Her Two Portraits	95
At Rest	101

Might Have Been.

An old man lay on the village green,
Dreaming of things that might have been.

Thorough the trees the sunlight played,
And flecked his forehead with shine and shade.

Under the trees, over the grass,
He saw the light and shadow pass;

Falling and fading over the green,
Like the spirit of things that might have been.

Lying there, alone, on the grass,
Thinking of nothing that is, or was;

Only dreaming there, on the green,
Of beautiful things that might have been.

Prayers unanswered; vows unbreathed;
Flowers ungathered, and wreaths unwreathed.

Lips unkissed, and loves untold,
And breaking hearts, and grief controlled;

And unheard footsteps in fairy dells,
And the music of unrung marriage bells;

And true love-tears that fell unseen,
And buried babes in the churchyard-green.

"Ah, far sky," the old man said,
"Art thou a home of the risen dead?

There to meet, for evermore,
The friends we loved and lost of yore?

Nay, ah, nay; but a lovelier place,
There to meet them, face to face—

The loves on earth that were never seen,
And the beautiful things that might have been."

Out from school the children sped,
And found the old man lying dead.

Deep asleep, in the shadows cool,
And his dead face calm and beautiful.

And the little children had no fear,
But they came from afar, and they stood anear.

And some of them wept ; and some there were
That stooped, and kissed his silver hair.

And some of them prayed—" Wherever you be,
May the wings of the angels shelter thee ! "

Ah, old man, who doth happy seem,
Is this the earnest of thy dream :—

Beautiful children, pure as snow,
Treading softly, and bending low—

Loves thou hadst never known on earth,
Snowy spirits of angel birth—

Loves on earth thou hadst never known,
Beautiful spirits, all thine own,

Praying for thee their childish prayer,
And dropping tears on thy silver hair ?

Who can tell, for who hath seen ?
It might have been—it might have been.

A Bouquet of Flowers.

A BOUQUET of cherished flowers
I gathered one summer's day;
And some of them still are blooming,
And others have faded away—

Have faded for ever and ever:
Frail flowers that I could not save;
But my thoughts still linger with them,
Like flowers upon their grave.

And I know as the years fly forward,
With their changing lights and shades,
My flowers will sere and wither,
Till my whole fair bouquet fades.

And I think in the world's wide garden
Of myriad minds and men,
How like are the friends I cherish
To the bouquet I gathered then.

A few true friends in sunshine;
A few tried friends in tears:
A wreath of roses and cypress,
A bouquet of byegone years!

A few of my flowers have faded,
  But I know they will live again,
And bloom out of death's dark anguish
  As a rainbow blooms out of rain.

And I know as the years fly forward,
  And wither the world's bright dells,
We shall bloom, as of old, together,
  A bouquet of immortelles.

Becalmed.

It was as calm as calm could be;
A death-still night, in June:
A silver sail, on a silver sea,
Under a silver moon.

No low least air the still sea stirred,
But all on the dreaming deep
The white ship lay, like a white sea-bird,
With folded wings, asleep.

For a long, long month not a breath of air,
For a month not a drop of rain;
And the gaunt crew watched in wild despair,
With a fever in throat and brain.

And they saw the shore, like a dim cloud, stand
On the far horizon sea;
It was only a day's short sail to the land,
And the haven where they would be.

Too faint to row—no signal brought
An answer, far or nigh:
"Father, have mercy—leave us not
Alone, on the deep, to die!"

And the gaunt crew prayed on the decks above,
And the women prayed below:
"One drop of rain, for God's great love!
O God, for a breeze to blow!"

But never a shower from the skies would burst,
And never a breeze would come:
Ah, Christ! to think that man can thirst,
And starve, in sight of home!

But out to sea, with the drifting tide,
The vessel drifted away;
Till the far-off shore, like the dim cloud, died;
And the wild crew ceased to pray.

Like fiends they glared, with their eyes aglow;
Like beasts with hunger wild;
But a mother knelt, in the cabin below,
By the bed of her little child.

It slept, and lo! in its sleep it smiled:
A babe of summers three:
"O Father, save my little child,
Whatever comes to me!"

Calm gleamed the sea; calm gleamed the sky;
No cloud—no sail—in view;
And they cast them lots for who should die
To feed the starving crew.

Like beasts they glared, with hunger wild,
And their red, glazed eyes aglow;
And the death-lot fell on the little child
That slept in the cabin below!

And the mother shrieked in wild despair—
"O God! my child, my son!
They will take his life; it is hard to bear—
Yet, Father, Thy will be done!"

And she waked the child from its happy sleep,
And she kneeled by the cradle bed:
"We thirst, my child, on the lonely deep—
We are dying, my child, for bread.

On the lone lone sea no sail—no breeze—
Not a drop of rain in the sky:
We thirst—we starve—on the lonely seas,
And thou, my child, must die!"

She wept: what tears her wild soul shed
Not I, but God, knows best;
And the child rose up from its cradle bed,
And crossed its hands on its breast.

"Father," he lisped, "so good—so kind—
Have pity on mother's pain;
For mother's sake, a little wind—
Father, a little rain!"

And she heard them shout for the child from
the deck,
And she knelt on the cabin stairs:
"The child! the child!" they cry, "stand
back,
And a curse on your idiot prayers!"

And the mother rose in her wild despair,
And she bared her throat to the knife:
"Strike—strike—me—me; but spare, O,
spare
My child, my dear son's life!"

O God! it was a ghastly sight—
Red eyes, like flaring brands,
And a hundred belt-knives flashing bright
In the clutch of skeleton hands!

"Me—me—strike—strike—ye fiends of
death!"
But soft—thro' the ghastly air
Whose falling tear was that? whose breath
Waves thro' the mother's hair?

A flutter of sail—a ripple of seas—
A speck on the cabin pane:
O God, it is a breeze—a breeze—
And a drop of blessèd rain!

And the mother rushed to the cabin below,
And she wept on the babe's bright hair—
"The sweet rain falls; the sweet winds blow;
Father has heard thy prayer!"

But the child had fallen asleep again:
And lo! in its sleep it smiled;
"Thank God!" she cried, "for His wind and
His rain—
Thank God for my little child!"

One Yule-Tide's Tale.

HARD beat the hail against the pane,
And the winter winds did blow;
And dead the frozen woodland lay
In a winding-sheet of snow.

Across the blown rack flew the moon:
The poplar on the heath
Stood shuddering in the shivering wind
Like a giant froz'n to death.

Within, the stair-clock clicking low;
The yule-fire blazing warm:
Without, the rattling of the hail,
And the roaring of the storm.

Against the pane a child's bright face
In watchful love was prest;
Waiting for father's kiss, she watched,
And a cradle on father's breast.

And the mother gazed in the blazing fire,
And she listened the breezes' roar;
And she longed for her goodman's hand on the latch,
And her goodman's face at the door.

" O God, I pray Thee guide his feet
In the way which they should go ;
For the cataract sleeps in an icy shroud,
And the river is dumb with snow."

With fair good things the board was spread ;
And the yule-fire blazèd bright ;
And all the happy homestead smiled
With the cheer of Christmas night.

For at the door, that morn, he stood,
And, stooping, kissed the twain ;
" Before the setting sun," he said,
" I shall be home again.

So pile the yule-fire high," said he,
" And spread the Christmas cheer ;
For Christmas night is the happiest night
Of all the dear old year."

But now the moon was high in the sky ;
Long spread the Christmas cheer,
And the piled yule-fire roared high in the flue,
" But, father—he is not here."

And the bright face peered thro' the driving hail
For the shadow of father's form ;
And she heard, in thought, his footsteps fall,
In the pauses of the storm.

No hand on the latch; no face at the door;
And the night to midnight wears;
Only the sound of the crackling fire,
And the click of the clock on the stairs.

"See you not father coming, my child—
His form on the moonlit plain?"
But lo! the bright face, weary, lay
Asleep against the pane!

Then suddenly the hail-storm ceased;
And soft, over moor and dell,
Like the fall'n feathers of a dove,
The silent snowflakes fell.

And the wild winds ceased, and all the world
Lay still, like a sleeping child.
And the latch was lifted silently,
And an old man entered mild.

His voice was gentle, like a dove;
His hair was soft, like fleece;
And his eyes were bright with an inward light;
And his spirit seemed of peace.

"Mother, why sit you there so pale?
Be of good cheer," he smiled;
Then to the sleeping babe he said—
"Sweet be thy sleep, my child.

O mother, rise, rejoice with me,
And be of holy cheer,
For Christmas night is the happiest night
Of all the dear old year.

God walks thro' summer flowers, and when
The winds of winter blow
All round the cottage you may see
God's footprints in the snow."

Then down the hard hail drave again,
And the rising wind did roar;
When lo! a sudden hand on the latch,
And her goodman's face at the door.

"O father, father, welcome back!"
"O husband, welcome home:
Long is the good cheer spread—eat—rest;
O nevermore to roam.

Did the bright yule-fire guide thee home—
The yule-fire's beacon glow?"
"Nay, nay," he said, "'twas they, 'twas they—
God's footprints in the snow.

O, I was dying in the storm;
Aimless I seemed to roam,
Until I found those feet of God,
That led the wanderer home."

Faint, by the fading fire, he lay,
For his life was ebbing slow;
For the old man was Death, who left
God's footprints in the snow.

"O, I am weary, weary," he moaned,
"I would no longer roam:
But follow those dear feet of God
That lead the wanderer home."

Then came the old man near, and in
The yule-fire's fading light,
Closed his faint eyes, and, kneeling, said,
"Son, welcome home: good night."

Then to the mother: "Rise, rejoice;
Of all the dear old year
This Christmas night is the happiest night
For him who lieth here.

A happy yule is his; even now
He blesseth me, I know,
Who led him home with death's cold feet—
God's footprints in the snow!"

In the Mirror.

(Written after a dance.)

I LOOKED in the glimmering mirror
  In the mingled gleam and gloom,
And I saw her standing beyond me
  At the door of the lonely room.

For all the guests had departed,
  And the dawn rose, grey and chill;
And the light of the lamp was dying,
  And the sweet dance-music was still.

Alone, at the doorway, I saw her,
  In her soft, white shimmering dress,
And the gleam of her maiden beauty,
  And her soul's white loveliness.

I passed by the glimmering mirror,
  But she did not hear me pass,
And I only saw her reflected,
  Like a dream, in the gleam of the glass.

A pale, soft dream in the mirror;
  A dim face, far withdrawn;
A white-robed form in the starlight,
  Like the spirit of light and dawn.

And lo! as I breathed, and watched her,
I saw the sweet vision decay,
And her face, in my breath on the mirror,
Faintly fading away.

And I turned aside for an instant,
And lo! from the mirrored pane
My breath had passed, and I saw her,
Like a spirit, glimmer again.

And I thought, as I watched her shining,
When the heart's brief music is dumb,
There are shining souls that await us
In the strange bright world to come.

And I thought the world was the chamber,
And the gleaming mirror was death;
And I, as I stood before it,
Was the shadow of a breath.

I breathed—a shadow—before it;
A shadow—a breathing clod;
And I thought my darling beyond it
Was the glimmering angel of God

Standing, white-robed, at the doorway
Of Heaven to greet me, and bless,
In the gleam of her maiden beauty,
And her soul's white loveliness.

And O, the day will be gracious—
For on earth we are parted wide—
When the mirror of death is broken,
And we meet at the other side.

And I hope I shall see her hereafter
As I saw her there by the door,
Not changed—but the same for ever,
And ever, and evermore.

For I know no face in heaven
To me will lovelier seem
Than hers, which I saw reflected
In the gleam of the glass, like a dream.

The Voice of the Wind.

"WHAT meanest thou, O fresh spring wind,
Whistling so cheerily?
Why at yon sunny nursery-blind
Singest so merrily?"
"In yon fair room a babe is born;
I sing to greet the merry morn."

"What meanest thou, O summer wind,
That thou dost breathe so low?
What burden bearest on thy mind?
What secret none may know?"
"Beneath yon spreading chesnut-bough
Two lovers breathe a solemn vow."

"What meanest thou, O autumn wind,
Moaning so drearily?
Why at yon muffled window-blind
Wailest so wearily?"
"Death's anguish rends a mourner's breast;
She wails for sleep—she moans for rest."

"What meanest thou, O winter wind,
Striding so mightily?
What secret rapture dost thou find
Rending the cloud-cast sky?"
"From earth this night a soul is riven:
I roll the clouds away from heaven."

So Cruelly Meek.

ALONE in my darkened chamber
I see thee glimmer and rise,
With thy sweet white face beside me,
And the light of thy soft grey eyes.

And I look back into the distance,
And I feel my spirit rejoice,
Till the chamber is filled with music,
And the song of thy low sweet voice.

A step, a touch, in the darkness;
A touch of thy warm white hand;
And the sound of thy falling footsteps,
As once in our old love-land.

And, far in the hazy future,
My spirit floats and dwells;
Thy sweet white face at the altar,
And the music of marriage bells.

And *he*, low kneeling beside thee;
A pathway with roses strewn;
Thy fair bride-maidens around thee,
And I, at the porch, alone.

A pæan of rolling music;
  A present with rapture fraught;
A future of splendour before thee,
  And I, and the past, forgot.

A step—a touch—in the sunlight—
  His touch of thy proud small hand;
And the sound of thy far-off footsteps,
  Ah, God! in the new love-land!

A silent step on the stairway;
  A heart that breatheth hard;
A prayer—a moan—and a silence—
  A grave in the still churchyard.

And I, at the proud tomb, praying,
  In spite of the scorn, and the pain,
And the pride, and the wild soul-anguish,
  To die, and to meet thee again.

Old Love-Letters*

A DAY, a week, a month have past:
  A year hath flown away;
Beside her, on the open desk,
  His old love-letters lay.

Ah, me! that those who meet in smiles
  So soon in tears should part!
She reads his letters o'er and o'er;
  She knows them all by heart!

She reads them till the daylight fades;
  And 'neath the moonlit sky
She sleeps at rest, for on her breast
  Those old love-letters lie.

In this he told her all his love;
  In this he breathed his vow;
For all the world she would not lose
  Those old love-letters now!

---

* Set to music by Arthur Sullivan (in the press). London: Boosey & Co., 298 Regent Street.

He loved her well; a warrior brave
He sought the deadly fray;
But ere *her* first love letter came
His soul had passed away!

A flower she gave—her pictured face:
A tress of sunny hair;
And death, that chilled his warm heart, found
Those old love-letters there!

Sabbath Chimes.

I woke, one Sabbath, long ago,
When life, a bud, was springing;
And softly through the open'd pane
I heard the church bells ringing.

Beside my bed my mother watched;
And in the golden weather
I rose anon, and hand-in-hand
Churchward we walked together.

Sweet Sabbath bells! sweet watching face!
I think that God hath set ye
In song and light about my soul
That I should ne'er forget ye.

For often now, tho' earthly ties
To earth more closely bind me,
Tho' far away that Sabbath morn
Lies, like a dream, behind me,

When, man with fellow man, to pledge
The glowing hour that passes,
We meet and greet, a festive throng,
And drink, and clink our glasses,

Often, between the pledging cups,
In the pauses of the singing,
I see my mother's watching face—
I hear the church bells ringing.

A child—a man—I doubly live;
We talk to one another;
A man unto my fellow man,
A child unto my mother.

And such, methinks, is life; tho' bright
Time's golden sands are gleaming,
Often, amid man's mirth, there comes
A pause for childish dreaming;

And in that pause, tho' joys distract,
And friends around us gather,
Our souls steal back to those young years,
Like children to their father.

I know not why, except perchance
Across that childish laughter
We hear some lisping echo breathe
Of some new birth hereafter.

Old Year's Night.

It was the last night of the old dead year,
For when I waked again,
I saw the new-year's glory, golden-clear,
Gleam on the nursery pane.

A weary child, I dreamed the night away
Under the moaning skies;
For when it dawned, behold! the new year's day
Opened my slumbering eyes.

I thought, in dreams, the old year lived again,
As it, sweet year! had been;
The glad spring birds; the lambs upon the plain;
The kingcups on the green;

And skylarks twinkling in the glorious sun,
Like drops of glistering dew;
And white-sailed butterflies, that on and on
Skimmed through the sky's deep blue.

And great rich bees, lazily wandering
Thro' the gleam-golden haze;
And fire-flies flashing on a rainbow wing,
Dazzling my baby gaze.

And she, my sweet pale sister, that is dead,
Was there among the flowers,

With all the glad sun glorying round her head,
As in the byegone hours.

And I, for bliss, could neither move nor speak,
To see her standing there;
Only my still tears fell about her cheek,
And sparkled thro' her hair.

"O, marvel not, sweet brother mine," she said,
"To see me standing here,
And living still; the old sad year is dead;
This is a glad new year.

Our old dead flowers, this new year, bye and bye,
Shall clothe their naked stem,
And rise again, and live; even so shall I
Arise, and live with them."

Then on each stem, where Death's long blight had lain,
I saw pale buds appear;
And when I waked, behold! the nursery pane
Gleamed with the glad new year.

And well I know the dawn's sweet glimmering
That gilds my nursery pane
Comes, as my pure pale sister spake, to bring
The dead flowers back again.

And she, I know, who sleeps in Death's dark night,
O! be it far or near,
Shall be awakened by the sweet dawn-light
That brings in God's New year.

A Christmas Carol.*

Lo! a star, ye sages hoary;
Lo! a wondrous star above:
He is born, the King of Glory—
He, our wondrous Star of Love.

Lord of Life, Redeemer, Master!
Loud the shepherds' welcome rolls:
He is born, the people's Pastor,
He, the Shepherd of our Souls.

He, a child, and earth obeys Him;
Kings to Him their tributes give:
Rise, ye dead in sin, and praise Him—
He is born that ye may live.

In Thy lowly manger lying,
Prince of Might and Majestie,
Keep, O keep us, living, dying,
Humble, lowly, meek, like Thee.

---

* Set to music by Walter Newport. London: Novello, Ewer & Co.

When from earth we fail to borrow
  Peace for heart and souls oppressed,
Child of sorrows, heal our sorrow;
  Spirit, give our spirits rest.

Let all evil past behaviour
  In Thy love forgotten be;
May our souls, O gentle Saviour,
  Be this day new-born with Thee.

On Re-Visiting School.

ONCE more I pace the columned square,
The playground, green and cool,
And the lilac-avenue that leads
To the old deserted school.

Dear happy house! dear happy ground,
Where I was used to roam!
Dear fadeless lilac-avenue!
Dear memory-haunted home!

Tho' twelve strange years, since last we met,
Like a mist have rolled away,
Thy sweet breath hovers round me still,
Like the breath of yesterday.

I hear a hundred boys at sport,
A hundred forms I see;
I look into a hundred eyes,
And no one knoweth me.

Lonely, amid their throngs, I pace
The old familiar ways;
Silent, amid their songs, I steal
Like a ghost of other days.

What is Thy mystic Past, O God?
  Is it a man's strong breath
Which to a childish Present speaks,
  And no one answereth?

The low sun sinks behind the hill;
  Across the silent street
The lone school and its lilacs lie
  In shadow at my feet!

Ah, happy childish years, on earth
  Too beautiful to last!
A living ghost I stand among
  Thy shadows of the Past!

Shake hands, dear Past, and speak again:
  Here—in thy shade—I stand;
Ah, God! a strange unanswered voice,
  A pale unanswered hand!

Far off, beyond the hill, I hear
  The church-clock tolling low;
The same sad voice that oft I heard
  A dozen years ago!

Come, let us answer, O my soul,
  That Voice that calleth thus;
Perchance among the tombs we'll find
  Some friend that knoweth us.

A living soul I seek the dead:
  Amid the churchyard gloom
A ghost, I glide—a voice, I speak
  Unto a silent tomb!

A living voice, unto the Past
  I speak—I moan—I sing:
Out of the hollow tombs I hear
  Mine own voice answering!

Ye are not here, dear happy dead!
  Methinks I hear ye say—
"Like thine own happy school-fellows,
  We, too, have gone away!"

Ah, God! can it be so? of him
  That nought remaineth, save
A fadeless memory in mine heart,
  And a little faded grave?

O, sweet, dead friend! O, poet-child!
  Beneath life's morning beams
How oft I watched thee move, and weave
  Thine exquisite wild dreams!

Perchance thy visioned angels were
  Of all thy dreams apprized;
Perchance, with them, in other worlds
  Thy dreams are realized!

I do not weep to find thee dead,
For thou on earth did seem
No more to me than the memory
Of a beautiful fleet dream.

A beauteous, dreamful child, that talked
With bright futurity!
A little form that wandered here
With its spirit in the sky!

A future-dreaming babe—a soul
In angel image cast;
A faded grave, that knoweth not
Earth's present or earth's past!

Therefore, sweet child, since Time hath proved
Thy wondrous dreams were right,
I kneel, and kiss thy faded grave,
And bid the past good-night.

Dreaming, as thou didst dream (since here
The Past and Present die),
Myself, like thee, must be some part
Of God's Futurity!

Up the Avenue.

THERE is a slender cottage, built of earth,
With flowers before the door, and many weeds—
The gate-lodge of the avenue that leads
To the great house called Death.
The trees that skirt the avenue
Are willow trees, and cypress trees, and yew,
Close interwoven, yet not all so close
But that from high, betwixt the riven boughs,
A little glimpse of sunshine sometimes glimmers thro';
And here, beneath the cypress and the yew,
And willow trees of the dark avenue,
We meet, in the shine, in gladness,
And part, in the shade, in sadness,
Father and husband, friend and brother,
Sister and children, wife and mother,
And laugh, and mourn, and kiss one another,
And gladden our sad hearts with converse sweet,
Or bathe with mutual tears our weary feet.
Then, in deep shadow, when, with limbs outworn,
And bruiséd feet, sore pierced with many a thorn,
We come at last unto our journey's end,
At the great house we stand, and knock with joy;
And Death, that knows no scorn,
Or any annoy,
Opens unto us, like a generous friend,
And bids us sleep with him until The Morn.

For Dead Love's Sake.

Ah, old years, for ever faded!
Ah, lost love, for ever fled!
In thy shadow, Hope is shaded,
With thy dying, Joy is dead,
"Tell me, spirit, tell me wholly,
Will her dead love never wake?
Tell me softly, tell me lowly,
For dead love's sake."

"Heart that beatest faint and slow,
Hast thou any life within?
'Tis dead love that knocketh low:
Let dead love in."

"Cold—apart—my lady keepeth:
Ah, to think old love should die!"
"Love is never dead, but sleepeth."
"Tell me, spirit, tell me why?"
"Dost thou love thy lady wholly?
Wouldst thou that dead love should wake?
Listen, while I tell thee lowly,
For dead love's sake:

Love from life can ne'er depart;
Love to life its spirit gives;
Take dead love to thy warm heart,
And dead love lives!"

Found Drowned.

Our frail life fleeteth away
  Like a footprint on the shore;
And the dust, that is life, returns
  To the dust, that was death before;
And the place that knew us of old
  Soon remembereth us no more.

She was a lone, sweet child:
  The blue sea brake by her home,
And the tiny footprints would tell
  Where the lone child loved to roam,
And the wild white waves, when it blew,
  Would fill them with flying foam.

And here she would walk by day,
  Alone in her childish glee,
Till her heart waxed light, like the wind;
  And her pale cheek's sad lily
Would blush to a soft red rose
  To the wooing wind of the sea.

Her bright hair rose on the wind,
  Like seaweed on the wave;

And the fresh sea-breath to her hair
  Its own sweet fragrance gave,
And soft through its mazes sang
  Its mystical ocean stave.

All noon she would stand and watch
  The stout ships buffet the spray
Far out on the billowing deep;
  Or at night, in the soft moonray,
Float by, with the gleam on their sails,
  And glide, like a dream, away.

Over her bright lone head
  Shrill-shrieked the lone seamew,
Then dropt and dasht in the foam,
  Then arose, and shrieked anew,
And flapped from its flashing wings
  The dripping ocean-dew.

So past the child's pure life;
  Ever the sky—the strand—
And ever the breaking deep
  On the everlasting land;
And ever the wave that washed
  Her footprint from the sand!

Then came a change to the child;
  As tho' to the child of its choice—

Its love's first choice—came a breath,
  Like a breath of calm seas that rejoice,
Flashing in the blaze of the sun—
  A breath—a still small voice.

The sea is His—He made it;
  His own still voice it may be
That speaks thro' the sea's great heart,
  Like the heart of eternity—
His spirit that walks on the deep,
  As of old upon Galilee.

Weary with work and play!
  Asleep on the yellow sands!
Over the world's wide sea
  Gone into other lands;
Closèd the tired eyes,
  Folded the weary hands.

Bright sea-flowers lay at her feet,
  Blown in from the sea's bright dells;
Beyond blue skies; around
  Footprints and baby castles;
And her bright head lay at rest
  On a pillow of golden shells.

Asleep on the yellow sands!
  Quiet the childish glee,

Wavering the golden hair
To the wavering wind of the sea,
And the soft red rose on her cheek
Returned to the pale lily.

Then they bore the child to her grave—
Only a flowerless mound;
Only an idle tear—
Only a word, "found drowned";
And the blue waves washed away
The footprints and castles around.

Over the sea, as of old,
The seamew shrieketh wild,
And the bright sun smileth still
On the place where of old it smiled;
And the blue sea breaks as of old
By the home of the sleeping child.

So passeth our life away,
Like a footprint on the shore;
So the dust, that is Life, returns
To the dust, that was Death before;
And the place that knew us of old
Soon remembereth us no more.

The Old Sweet Story.*

It was the old sweet story,
Sweet story of old:
She was a village maiden;
He was a warrior bold.
"Farewell, true heart; we twain must part—
The battle rages fierce and free;
On a strange, far shore, in the war's wild roar,
Think of me, maiden, and pray for me."

It was the old sad story,
Sad story of old:
Sore with a foeman's arrow
Pierced lay the warrior bold.
"Tho' deep my wound," the warrior moaned,
"I have no dread, O death, of thee;
And my wound seems light, for I feel to-night
That one true heart is praying for me."

It was the old sweet story,
Sweet story of old:
Healed of his wound, in triumph
Home turned the warrior bold.

---

* Set to music by Alfred Scott Gatty. Published by Messrs. Boosey & Co.

"O sweet, true heart, no more we'll part;
O heart that loved and prayed for me;
Thro' thee I live: to thee I give
This heart, this life that was saved by thee."

It was the old sad story, *
Sad story of old:
Gone was the village maiden;
Bare was the hearth and cold.
"O dear dead heart, no more we'll part,
O spirit blest that watched o'er me!"
In the churchyard shade, with the village maid,
The warrior sleeps 'neath the willow tree.

---

* This verse is omitted in Mr. Gatty's song.

At Lilac Hill.

December, 1876.

THIS is my Christmas chime for thee:
That thou and change may strangers be.

As thou art now—and wert of yore—
So may thou be for evermore.

In change of light and shadow still
The sunshine of thy Lilac Hill.

And in thy beauteous future sphere
As beauteous as we knew thee here.

May griefs, like softest snowflakes, lie
Light on thy white virginity.

May each breathed sigh, each sob that swells
Be lost in chimes of marriage-bells.

May love's own moonlight wings be spread
Around thy moonlit marriage-bed;

May love-birds sing, for love's delight,
Thro' all thy moonlit marriage-night.

And low-voiced airs, for love's content,
Whisper a soft accompaniment.

If sorrows dim thy sunny hours,
May sorrows fall like sunny showers,

Only to make thy darkened spheres
Beam lovelier from their bath of tears.

So may thy wedded life be run—
Two snowflakes mingled in love's sun:

Souls interlaced by love's soft spells;
Twined interwreaths of immortelles.

Knowing not fear, or ought that harms:
Children in mutual cradling arms.

So may ye live, a mingled twain,
And only die to live again.

So may thou smile—so only weep;
And when, at last, thou fain would sleep,

O may the gentle voice of death
Be like a friend's that whispereth:

A friend that comes to cheer, and save—
A rainbow on thy lilac grave!

This is my prayer for thee and time.
And may each merry Christmas chime

That rings across the Christmas air
Ring the fulfilment of my prayer.

So shalt thou be for evermore
As thou art now—and wert of yore—

A child of love, a maid that seems
The earnest of love's loveliest dreams.

My Choice.

If an angel came from heaven,
  And the angel whispered thus:
"If thou, when thy life is ended,
  Would arise, and be with us;
Then, that we may test thy meetness,
  By the sanctity thou showest,
Lay the lowliest gift thou hast
  At the holiest shrine thou knowest."
Then would I look up, and answer:
  "Watch me, angel, while I go
With my lowliest gift, to lay it
  At the holiest shrine I know."
Then, beneath that angel's watching,
  Knowing that the choice which I
Made of gift and shrine would gain me
  Death or immortality;
I would go and seek my lady
  In the places where we meet,
And kneel down, and lay my spirit
  At her feet.

An Arm-Chair Doze.

My home is called the valley of the sand.

Year after year the amorous summer airs
Kiss the red lips of many a blushing rose
In the fair fields of my sand-valley home;
And many tender pansies, that are pink,
Like little pink-cheeked children, in the spring,
Peep from their mother's lap, till, fed with dew
And sunshine from above, they rise and love
Their other gentle mother in the sky.
And when the springtide and the summer pass
We keep our dark grey autumn homestead bright
And blue with borders of nemophila.
And in the winter many snowdrops blow,
Like spirits of the bright departed flowers
Of autumn, and of summer, and of spring.

O, I have wakened from a lovely dream,
Dreamed in an arm-chair by the midnight fire.

All in the autumn, when our home was bright
And blue with borders of nemophila,
I past into the hills at eventide
To lead the lambs back to my father's fold.

My father—he, a weak, meek, agèd man,
A frail, white-haired, death-bedded, second child,
Filled, like a child, with beautiful wild dreams.

For, when he saw the sunset, like a rose,
Bloom on the lonely summit of the hills,
"There is God smiling on the mountain-heights,"
He said, "and bidding His dear world good-night.
So let me sleep, child, when my Father smiles."
And, in the light, he slowly slipt asleep.

But when he saw the moving summer moon
Shine on the lonely churchyard on the hill,
And glimmer on the dew upon the graves:
"There is an angel moving by the church,"
He said, "and watching its belovèd dead,
And kissing all the tears they wept away:
So let me sleep, child, where the angels watch."

Then I would rise, and move his dying bed
Nigh to the window, and my father slept
There with the moving moonlight on his face.

And when he heard the bugling breezes blow
Down the long windings of our mountain vale,
Rolling the mists before them, like a cloud:
"There is a shepherd blowing on his horn,"
He said, "and there flock all his fleecy lambs
Flying to meet him, for they hear him blow;
So let me go, child, when my Shepherd calls."

And forth I past into the evening hills
To lead the lambs back to my father's fold.

Still was the eve. Only a gentle air
Lisped thro' the leaves, and rocked the quiet boughs
That droopt in rest: a still eve, like a voice
That lisps and rocks a bedded babe asleep;
And in the sky two solitary stars
Looked down in peace—the mother's eyes, who rocked
And lisped the quiet, gentle lullaby.

Then, when I gained the mountain, where the lambs
Lay bleating for their shepherd, lo! the whole
Hill-peak was clothed with bellying cloud, and all
The bellying cloud was big with swollen storm,
And luminous with muffled fumes of fire;
And all the air swooned in a slumbrous hush.

Then out of the cloud the light with a leap
Flashed, like a falchion from a sudden sheath,
Stabbing the dark; and ever and anon
I heard, deep-echoing thro' the mountain bluffs,
The thunder-cannons boom about the hills.

To me, a simple mountain-child, it seemed
As tho' a hooded giant on the hills

Stood, red with wrath, and in his mighty arms
Clutched a huge boulder-stone, and hurled it down
Over the cliff; and there it bounded and rolled,
Cracking and shattering on from crag to crag,
And buffeting from bulging bluff to bluff,
And flashing fire out of the splintering flints,
And moaning down into the ravine below.

Then her pure gentle beautiful white face
Looked in upon the storm, and her soft breath
Hovered about my spirit on the wind,
And in the storm she kissed me the first time,
And then I heard her voice speak unto me
Like mute awakened music: O, she seemed
There in the storm, an angel, pure and pale;
Pale in the still woe of her star-like eyes;
Pale in the white light of the livid storm;
Pure in her spiritual loveliness.

Then came my father from our valley-home,
Leaving his death-bed in his wondrous dreams,
And smiling at the splendour of the storm.
And when mine eyes had strength to gaze again,
Blinded with sudden amaze, lo! my love
Had vanished: only my frail father stood,
Silent, beside me in his wondrous dreams.
And into his eyes I cried instinctively—
"Where hath she vanished, father?" "There,"
he said,

And pointed to a rainbow in the sky.
"She came, like some soft sunset rose, to bid
Our world's wild storm good-night, and now she blooms
Again among the flowers of Paradise."

Then came my mother from our valley-home,
And laid her arms around my neck, and wept,
And loosed the long wealth of her golden hair
And wrapt it all about me, like a cloak,
To shield me from the wild tears of the storm.

So with these three, in mute amaze, I stood:
My love, within her rainbow in the sky;
And my frail father in his wondrous dreams;
And my pale mother in her gentle tears.
And then the storm ceased suddenly, and I waked.

All was a dream; my father, mother, all—
And she, my love, a dream within a dream.
I have no love; for neither shine nor shower
That smiles and weeps upon her fadeless bed
Touch her dear tranquil beautiful dead face.
I have no father, for his humble name
On a low stone is clothed with humble moss.
I have no mother; for this tress of hair
That never fades, but ever shines in gold,
Tells of her shining immortality.

One Love Alone.*

A LIGHT in deepening gloom
Our bright hopes wane,
And brightest flowerets bloom
To fade again.
What matter, tho' vain dreams
To death are strown,
If one love lives, and beams,
One love alone?

What matter, tho' hope's beams
Are dark above,
When in our spirit gleams
One ray of love?
What matter, tho' flowers die
And hopes are strown,
If one love bloometh nigh,
One love alone?

One love, tho' all things fade,
One faithful breast,
One steadfast light in shade,
One place of rest.
One Soul in heaven above
To call our own;
On earth, one true lone love,
One love alone.

---

* Set to music by Berthold Tours. London: Duff & Stewart.

In the Firelight.

When the firelight flickers low,
And the shadows, to and fro,
Waver on the wall,
Faces that my soul remembers
In the fading, falling embers
Rise, and fade, and fall.

Faces dead, like living dreams,
In the firelight's flickering beams
Wavering, come and go;
Faces of the true true-hearted,
Of the loved, the lost, the parted,
Waver to and fro.

Hopes that fancy loves to weave—
Friends we dream can ne'er deceive—
Love that never tires—
Golden plans the lover traces—
What, what are ye, but bright faces
Seen in dying fires?

All's Well.

Up and down, through the dreaming town,
To and fro, thro' the soundless street,
Far and near, all night I hear
The measured tramp of feet.

'Tis the watchman, pacing slow
Thro' the city, to and fro;
'Tis the watchman, thro' the street
Pacing slow, with measured feet;
'Tis the watchman, up and down,
Pacing thro' the dreaming town;
And far away, with the change of time,
I hear the distant church-bells chime,
Echoing high through the silent sky,
Over the town where the weary sleep;
And the watchman paceth steadily,
And I hear him keep, as the slow hours creep,
Time with his chiming bell;
And he rings, and he sings, as the changing hour
Is clanged by the clock in the market-tower,
"All's well!
All's well!
Ave Sanctissime,
All's well!"

Low and deep, where the willows weep,
Deep and low, thro' the dead of night,
Over the grass the moonbeams pass
In flowing waves of light.
'Tis the angels, as they move
In among the graves they love;
Treading softly, bending low,
In a glory, as they go;
Moving through the mounded grass
In a glory, as they pass;
And far away, thro' the dreaming town,
The watchman paceth, up and down;
And deep and low, as the moonbeams flow
Over the graves of the quiet dead,
Echoing faintly, to and fro,
I hear the beat of his distant feet,
And the chime of his timing bell;
And he rings, and he sings, as the changing hour
Is chimed by the chimes in the churchyard tower,
"All's well!
All's well!
Ave Sanctissime,
All's well!"

HalloW-E'en.

YES, this is the very chamber—
  My mother was sitting there,
And father lay by the fireside,
  Asleep in the old arm-chair;
And there stood the blind old fiddler
  At the open door; and oh!
How we shouted and danced to the music
  Of dear old Rosin-a-bow!

And the nuts—how we watched them burning!—
  I cracked, and flared into flames;
And then came the apple-diving,
  And the listening for lovers' names;
And last, came the midnight stories,
  With ghosts and goblins rife,
Till oh! how we blest the morning,
  And the waking to real life!

Yes, this is the very chamber,
  But ah, what a change is there;
Dead is the blind old fiddler,
  Empty the old arm-chair.

And the hearts that beat high with rapture
On that even of long ago
Are silent now, like the music
Of dear old Rosin-a-bow!

And this eve, too, hath vanished;
Up from the green church-lawn,
Lifting the night's long shadows,
Rises the great bright dawn.
And I think, as I watch it rising,
And gilding the churchyard-green,
There's a Morning of Life hereafter,
And death is its Hallowed E'en.

A New-Year's Dream.

I DREAMED a beautiful dream
  One night when the two years met;
Tho' many a year ago,
  I remember my sweet dream yet.

I dreamed I stood at dawn
  By the marge of a lilied stream;
And the stream, like a path of gold,
  Gleamed in my beauteous dream.

And the broad stream stretched for ever,
  And mixed with the distant dawn;
And alone, by the lilied marge,
  Floated a silver swan.

And I said, "Thou beautiful swan,
  Or ever you float away,
O, bear my soul a message
  To the saints of the New Year's Day.

Pray them, O beautiful swan,
  Thro' all the year to be,
That never a shadow of sorrow
  May vex my dear ladye."

And the swan sailed slowly forward,
  And onward I watched it go,
Till it seemed, in the glimmering distance,
  Like a flake of silver snow.

Onward and upward it floated,
  And ever upward and on,
Till it faded into the distance,
  And died into the dawn.

Accept, my own lone love,
  This New Year's dream from me:
It is not a dream of fancy,
  But a dream of reality.

For the message I sent to heaven
  For thy weal thro' the year to be,
Is the prayer, from year to year,
  That my spirit hath prayed for thee.

And I know my prayer hath entered
  Thro' the hav'n of the golden dawn,
For my soul hath borne it thither,
  And my soul is the silver swan.

Yule-Bells.

THOSE Christmas bells—those Christmas bells—
I never hear them chime
But all my soul is borne away
To a happier bygone time;

Back to a happier bygone day—
To a merrier Christmas-tide,
When she and I, by the bright yule fire,
Were sitting side by side.

O my child, and my sweet dead child,
And my child with the angel brow!
O say do you hear, in your far bright sphere,
The church-bells chiming now?

I took the babe upon my knee,
And I braided her golden hair;
Far off the church-bells 'gan to chime
Thro' the quiet evening air.

Then suddenly she raised her voice
In childish questioning:
"It is not Sabbath, brother dear;
Why do the church-bells ring?"

"It is not Sabbath, yet they ring;
Listen, dear child, to them.
This is the night when Christ for us
Was born in Bethlehem.

A great bright star shone down from heaven
On the place where He did lie;
And He is born, sweet child, that we
Might never, never die.

He was a little child like thee;
A child, and yet a King;
And He hath saved us. This, my child,
Is the reason the yule-bells ring.

Why weep you, little sister mine?
Why weep you, sister dear?"
"O, if we cannot die," she said,
"Why is not mother here?"

I bent above the pensive face,
I kissed it many times;
I could but answer, "Listen, child,
To the happy Christmas chimes!"

I turned and looked upon her face;
Up to the skies afar
I saw the wide eyes of the child
Fixed on a great bright star.

Long gazed she on the beauteous light;
  Slowly she ceased to weep;
Then laid her head upon my breast,
  And softly slipt asleep.

Ye Christmas bells, as once ye chimed,
  I hear ye chiming still,
And all my soul is borne away
  To the churchyard on the hill.

I kneel upon a new-made grave;
  I whisper: "Sister dear,
Dear little sister, tell me now—
  Why is not mother here?"

I kneel beside the little grave;
  I kiss it many times;
I hear no answer, save the sound
  Of the happy Christmas chimes.

Over the graves, in waves of song,
  I hear the church-chimes pass;
I see a thousand beauteous stars
  Gleam on the snowy grass.

A great bright star shone down from heaven
  Where the sleeping Christ was laid:
To-night, a thousand heavenly stars
  Shine on my sleeping dead.

Shine on, sweet stars! ring on, sweet bells!
Beyond the starry light,
Until we meet, dear mother mine,
And sister dear, good night!

Lunatic Love.

If I were up in the moon,
  And my darling were down below,
As light never yet was strewn,
  Light on her path I would strow.

Down, like a golden dream,
  Into her room at night,
O, I would stream, and glimmer, and gleam,
  And flood her chamber with light.

And when, with her soul above,
  She knelt, by her lowly bed,
Lovingly listening, I would move
  In a halo around her head—

In a glory about her bed,
  In a halo around her soul,
And girdle her golden head
  With a golden aureole.

And night-long watch I would keep
  Thro' the lone night's changing chimes,
And, crossing her lips in sleep,
  Kiss her a million times.

And stealing with stealthy beams
  Under her closing sight,
Be with her still in dreams,
  And fill all her dreams with light.

If I were up in the moon,
  And my darling were down below,
Thus would my love be shewn,
  And never a soul would know.

O, if these things might be—
  If all my spirit were shed
All night in love for thee,
  In a glory about thy bed:

If, like a little child,
  You fancied some wan fond face
Down from the big moon smiled
  On your quiet resting-place,

Could you—yea or nay—
  (But perchance my dreams are vain,
For poets are mad, they say,
  And the moon affects their brain),

Could you—for love is wild—
  Sometime, late or soon,
Be brought, like a foolish child,
  To love—the man in the moon?

A World Apart.*

SIGHING, moaning evermore,
The bleak sea beats the barren shore,
And cannot be at rest;
High and low, across the foam,
In vain the sea-bird seeks a home
Upon the sea's rough breast.
Bird, on thy wild white wings unfurled,
Fly to my love in the far old world,
And tell her faithful heart,
"There with thee my heart doth rest,
I in the east and thou in the west—
Apart—a world apart."

Shining, smiling tranquilly,
The calm stars gem the silent sky
Like souls in blissful rest;
Soft and low, on wings of love,
The tender snow-clouds blush and move
Across the sky's soft breast.
Cloud, on thy soft white wings unfurled,
Glide to my love in her far bright world,
And tell her blissful heart,
"Still I live, oh, still I love,
Tho' I am here and thou above—
Apart—a world apart."

---

* Set to music by Richard F. Harvey. London: J. Blockley, Argyle-st.

The Suicide.

No hope: for she had waited many years,
And watched, and prayed, and hoped, and still she
stood
Alone upon the margin of the mere.
No hope. And lo, two angels—Sleep and Death—
Calm-eyed, and silent-hearted, beauteous both,
Came down, and stood beside her. Her large eyes
Were wild with woe, and all her heart beat hard,
Like wings that pant for liberty. He said,
And kissed her, saying it, when he went away,
That ere the sweet returning swallow thrice
Brought the new summer, he would come again,
And make her his true wife for evermore.
And she had hoped and waited all those years,
And seen the sweet returning swallow thrice
Bring the new summer, and depart again,
And still no speck or glittering glimpse of sail,
To bring her dear lord back from other lands,
Never to part again. Her eyes were wild
With sleepless tears, and all her heart beat hard
With hopeless agony. Then she raised her eyes,
And looked at Sleep, and lo, his eyes were calm;
And then at Death, and lo, his heart was still.

And, " O sweet Sleep," she said, " O happy Sleep,
That steeps love-languid eyes in holy balm ; "
And then, " O Death," she said, " O happy Death,
That puts an end to all love's hopeless pain."
Then being all aweary, laid her meek head
On the mere bank, and in the warm still night
Unbared her shining bosom to the stars.
" Come in, sweet Sleep, come in," and closed her eyes
And slept, and dreamed a happy dream, and waked,
And stared across the mere ; and still no sail.
And then she wept, and looked at Death with joy :
" Come in, sweet Death," and opened her white arms,
And Death came in. Not ever any more
The parted lovers meet on earth ; but one,
Bronzed with far suns, and late returned with hope,
Wanders alone beside the silent sea,
Calling her name, breaking his heart ; but one,
Beyond all voice of anguish, sleeps in peace,
Under the waveless waters of the mere.

Fly Away, O White Dove, Away.*

She is white and fair, like thee;
Fly away, O white dove, away!
Far o'er land and far o'er sea,
Fly away, O fair dove, away!
At the feet of my true love
Fold thy weary wings, O dove;
Whisper, "Lady, at thy feet
Thus to lie for aye were sweet,
Thus to lie and die were sweet!"

He is fond and true, like thee;
Fly away, O fond dove away!,
Back o'er land and back o'er sea,
Fly away, O true dove, away!
On the breast of my true love
Rest thy weary wings, O dove;
Whisper, "On thy true, true breast
Thus my weary head would rest,
Thus would lie and die at rest!"

---

* Set to music by Odoardo Barri. London: R. Cocks & Co., New Burlington Street.

My Lady's Grave.

When my dear lady dies,
And thro' my soul the sun of life doth cease,
And unto that bright house which angel-souls inherit
Her beautiful white spirit
Doth fleet and rise,
To lie in lilies of eternal peace,
And float among the flowers of paradise;
O, with her body of white wondrous charms
Lying, a folded lily, in mine arms,
Whither, O whither, angels, shall I tread,
To find a bed
To lay my dead?

Here in my garden by the ceaseless sea,
Whereinto a hundred rivulets eddy and hie,
As minutes eddy into eternity;
Even in my fadeless garden she shall lie.
Upon her bed
Lilies shall make pale pillows for her head,
And on her mother breast
Snowdrops shall lie, like children lapt in rest.
And I shall lay soft blue-bells on her eyes,
That when her orbs from death's dark sleep arise,
They may look up
Into each blue-bell cup,

And dream they be the blue arched dome of their
blue native skies.
And I shall lay a rose upon her lips,
That when her first low waking whisper slips,
When she ariseth from the still repose
Of dreamless death,
Her lip-laid sister-rose
May listen what her rosy sister saith,
And answer what each rose-lip whispereth.
And wreaths of immortelles
Shall circle the grave-garden where she dwells:
And in each yellow circle-ring
Myriads of blue forget-me-nots shall greet the
new-born spring.
And from her heart, that ever beat for me,
The sweet stray winds shall pulse and sway a
red anemone.
And angels, when they come
To waft her home
Out of the flowery bower where she reposes
Shall tread on pansies and on primroses,
And in her golden hair I shall enfold
The glory of a sunbeam marigold.
And over all a cypress tree shall wave,
And moan and moan and moan above her grave,
And, in the dewy twilight, weep
Still heavenly tears upon her sainted sleep.
And vassal angels in the new-born spring

Shall come adown into my lady's bower,
And gather many a beauteous garland flower
  Out of her deathless body blossoming,
And back to heaven their glorious garland bring,
As first-fruits of her body unto their Spiritual King.
And they shall bind the garland flowers together,
Even with the golden glory of her hair,
Like sunbeams woven into golden thread.
And God shall wear the garland on His head.

So shall my love be laid among the dead,
So shall my love be softly burièd.

Guinevere to Lancelot.

Rise, Lancelot, my Lancelot; let me go:
I am thy Queen; why dost thou hold me so?
High-throned my seat, mid kneeling knights, should be;
Not here, on this low couch, alone with thee.
I am thy Queen: my subject, art thou not?
Rise, let me go, my subject Lancelot.

Mightiest thou art, and noblest of renown;
But I, I am thy Queen: here—feel—my crown:
Comely my king, but lordlier, comelier thou:
Alone with thee, what wouldst thou, Lancelot, now?
Knightliest of knights, more comely than my king,
What wouldst thou have for thy peace-offering?

I am thy Queen: I know it by my crown:
But thou, my subject, how mayst thou be known?
Meek awe, liege voice, low head, and reverent mien,
And knees that kneel in fear before thy Queen;
But now—hast thou all awe, all fear forgot?
Art thou my subject still, my Lancelot?

O foremost in the lists and in the field!
O wielder of the lion-blazoned shield!

O lord of love! O star of tournament!
O strength nor knights nor heathen hordes have spent!
O arms that right the wronged, and spare the foe!
What, what am I, that thou shouldst love me so?

Cast hence my crown? What, wouldst thou kiss my
head?
O soft sweet mouth! O crown that lies like lead!
That a queen's crown? a subject's mouth is this?
O crown—O mouth—O Lancelot, by this kiss,
By this discrownèd head, these arms that cling,
By this—quick! get thee hence—the King! the King!

Golden Tresses.

FLYING, hieing, hither, thither,
  Ever fickle, ever free;
Casting glances, whither, whither?
  Now on others, now on me!
In her mazy golden tresses
  Tangling hearts, a spider fair;
Shakes her head at love's addresses:
  Gives us each a tress of hair!

Sleeping, weeping, never, never,
  Dost thou dream of other's pain?
Doth their sighing touch thee ever?
  Dost thou sigh for them again?
Laugh, light love, at love's addresses;
  Catch us in thy golden snare;
Howsoe'er thou shak'st thy tresses
  I am still a prisoner there!

Time is olden, tresses golden!
  Where thy snare for others lay,
Time's own subtle snare enfolden
  Warps their tender gold to grey;
When thy heart is old and lonely,
  And thy locks are shorn from thee,
Only then, O then, love, only
  Shall my fettered heart be free!

New Year's Eve.

I WOULD not give this old-year violet
For all the brightest flowers that ever grew;
Who would exchange an old friend for a new,
Or ask strange pleasure for a loved regret?
Who would exchange the dear face that is set
In the pure pearl of death-congealèd tears—
The pale hair clipt in hallowed happier years—
For all To-morrow's curls of deepest jet?
Ah, dying year, ye took them all in vain:
They are not dead, but only gone before,
To bloom again in some sweet new-year light:
'Tis thou alone that canst not live again:
Therefore, old year, farewell for evermore:
And ye, dear dead, until we meet, good-night.

One Face.

WHETHER or no, sweet maiden, thou hast come
  Unto the woodland quiet of this place
To vent thy mind from some vext ways of home,
  Or to make strong some dear impairèd grace,
    I cannot tell: I only know that I
  Have looked upon the beauty of thy face,
And on my dark soul felt thy calm eyes beam,
Like some still angel on a mourner's dream.

Here in this place of music and of flowers,
  Day after day in the sweet autumntide,
I watched thee move, what time the happy hours
  Gambolled in light and shadow at thy side,
    As tho' they were the bridesmaids of thy train,
  And thou sweet nature's own peculiar bride;
So ran the hours thy faultless grace to greet,
Showering their gloom and glory at thy feet.

Farewell, bright maiden; from thy sainted face
  Strengthened, I seek the troublous world again;
My once dark soul illumed by thy pure grace,
  Like one that late upon a parchèd plain

Did lie athirst, and dreamed of hopeless tears,
And waked, and lo! it was the blessèd rain;
Then deep he drinks, and kneeling on the sod
For that, His blessèd work, doth bless his God.

BUXTON, *September* 1878.

Asleep.

(Beside an opened Bible.)

I saw him slowly fall asleep;
I saw his long white hair
Fall on the Book upon his lap,
In the old arm-chair.

I saw his long and silvery curls
Droop on its holy page:
Across the Book of Living Light
The shadow of old age!

Sleep on, old man: O never yet
Did hand of angel lay
A purer pillow for man's head,
Golden or grey!

Blest, from bright dreams, may thou awake!
And when death's shadows steep
Thy closing eyes, O may thy head
On that pure pillow sleep.

So, when thou wakest, shalt thou find,
From out that holy bed,
The splendour of its morning truth
Around thy risen head!

A Sabbath Morn.

A NEW-WAKED skylark in the blue bright air
  Psalms to the sun, and from his twinkling wings
  Scatters the sunlit dewdrops as he sings,
And hangs in heaven a twinkling morning star.
Beyond, the blue sea smiles: from fields afar
  Low the meek kine: the opening roses raise
  Hearts unto heaven in silent perfume-praise,
And sweet church-chimes peal unto matin prayer.
I cross the churchyard; from the graves the gloom
  Of night hath passed: I hear the church-bells ring,
Wakening an echo from each hollow tomb,
  Like voices of the waked dead answering—
"There is no death: with this fresh Sabbath dawn
All dead things live: ring on, sweet bells, ring on."

My Love-Bird.

LITTLE airy fairy love-bird, little tender slender maid,
Mind-and-matter-mingled darling, mixture sweet of light and shade;
How can I express thy beauty—hands, and feet, and cheeks, and curls,
Airiest, fairiest, loveliest love-bird of the love-bird world of girls?

Love-bird, thou art Love's own sister; Love with thee forever dwells;
For thine everlasting beauty weaving wreaths of immortelles;
Wandering thro' thy mazy ringlets, stealing from thy golden hair
Threads of gold, to weave a golden crown to crown thee "fairest fair."

On thy double-pillowed bosom Love and thou together sleep;
Rocked to rest by cradling music which thy vigil heart doth keep;
Love and thou together waken from thy pillowed-bosom bed,
From thy breasts, like folded lilies, tipt with petals, rosy-red.

In thy face, as in Love's heaven, Love his dawn and
eve doth seek—
Light and shadow changing colour in thy colour-
changing cheek;
And his summer and his winter in thy blue eyes
glooms and glows;
And thy feet are twin love feathers, fringèd with thy
rosy toes!

O, thy lips are Eden roses, stolen from the bowers
above,
Blushing with the ceaseless kisses of thy deathless
brother, Love;
And thy hands are like an open lily in Love's lily-
bower;
And thy lissome lily fingers are the petals of the
flower.

Weep not, airy fairy love-bird, when thy hair is silver
grey;
'Tis not death, but Love, thy brother, who hath stolen
the gold away:
Thou shalt find thy hair in heaven, thou shalt find the
gold above,
Woven by thy brother's fingers to a golden crown of
love—

When thy brother calls thee homeward, when thy fairy sisters seek;
When thy ringlets' sunlight passes, and the roses leave thy cheek;
When thy roses pale to lilies, and thy gold hair turns to grey,
To thy fairy home in heaven, airy love-bird, fly away!

II.

Her life was like the life of birds,
When birds in May are met;
Her language, when she spake, was words
To music set.

To tripping song she tripped along;
And Death that stilled the nest
Came sweetly, in her life's mid-song,
A bar of rest—

The bar of rest that comes betwixt
A bird's last lullaby,
And that first song, with morning mixt,
It sings on High.

Under the Lilacs.

SOFT lay the way in moss beneath her feet;
And round her head I heard the wood-wren sing;
And, "sweet, sweet, sweet," his triplet twittering,
And ever twittering triply: "sweet, sweet, sweet."
Sweet swelling breast, with tuneful fate replete,
Unto my love what three sweets dost thou bring
Down from the sunlight on thy glossy wing,
With what three fates dost thou my lady greet?
Uprise, dear bird, and leave thy shadowed tree,
And bear my prayer back to the sunny sky,
(Nor let that prayer, dear bird, be breathed in vain)
That those three sweets for her and me may be—
Sweetly to love, and sweetly then to die,
And, after death, to sweetly love again.

A Love-Dream.

I DREAMED one night an angel whispered this:
" If thou wouldst see the gates of paradise
Open before thy spirit, as the skies
Open to spirits, risen to God's bliss;
If thou wouldst know what God's love-kingdom is,
And all its unimagined ecstasies,
Lift up thy soul, and kiss me on the eyes,
And thou shalt look on heaven in that soul's kiss."
Then lo! I waked, my sudden joy was such,
And saw my lady, dreaming, in low sighs,
Beside me, mingled with a morning beam;
And my soul leapt for love, and at a touch
Kissed her awake, and in her opening eyes
I saw the dear fulfilment of my dream.

My Marriage Morn.

As souls new-born, who hear their funeral knells
  Tolled upon earth, wake, and rejoice on high,
  I woke, and heard, clear-echoing thro' the sky,
The distant chiming of my marriage-bells.
Surely, dear God of Love, Thine own voice swells
  With that sweet marriage-music, seeing that I
  Love her with all my soul, that cannot die,
And Thou art He with whom love ever dwells.
Come with me, God, into Thy temple now;
  Stand at the altar when we twain do meet;
Hear Thou, and judge our mutual marriage-vow,
  Sworn there, O God, before Thy judgment seat:
Hear, judge, smile, bless us in that holy place—
She, Thou, and I, together, face to face.

After Marriage.

AND then I slept, and all day dreamed of her,
And waked, and lo! my dream beside me lay:
As one who prays, and rising trancedly
Sees the fulfilment of his holy prayer
Glimmering before him in the mystic air.
I heard in sleep her soft lips move and sigh,
Murmuring in dreams some last night's memory,
And once, in love, she clasped her own long hair.
There, like some soul that lieth nigh to death,
Waiting the opening of its native skies,
I lay, and watched her death-like fluttering breath,
Waiting the opening of her living eyes.
O deep deep eyes, wherein all glad things dwell,
Thou art my sea, and I thy murmuring shell!

Unchanged.

WHAT shall I do to keep her young,
As now, for ever fair?
Nor let one grey cloud creep among
The sunbeams of her hair?

"If, freed from grief, her happy hair
No silvering age may know,
Come thou and live with me, pale care,
Till I am white, like snow."

What shall I do to keep her eyes
From ever waxing dim?
O, if Death come, in Sleep's disguise,
What shall I say to him?

"If, spread like wings above her head,
My soul may brood for aye,
Rest thou with me in her sweet stead,
Dear Death, and let me die."

In the Garden.

THE yew, at her window, is trembling
To the breath of the passionate breeze;
And a glory of moonlight is lying
On her bed of anemones.
The sea, by the gate of her garden,
Makes music in ripples and swells;
So softly it sings that it seemeth
But the sound of the murmur of shells.

Her moonlit anemones glimmer
In a bath of glory and dew;
And her face, as she sleepeth, is shadowed
By the shade of the tremulous yew.
My tears are the dewdrops that glimmer;
And the moonlight that falls on her breast
Is the glamour of hopes that have perished;
And she is asleep, and at rest!

My soul is the yew at her window;
And its breath is the passionate breeze;
And my heart, with her memories enfolded,
Her bed of anemones.
The love of her fathomless spirit
Is the music that ripples and swells;
And *my* love is the whisper that answers,
Like the sound of the murmur of shells.

My Love, my Rose.

My love is like the summer rose:
  Rosy queen of summer roses;
Rosy-red the morning glows
  When her eyes my love uncloses.
Bloomed the dawn, a rose in heaven,
  When my love, my rose, was born;
Roses to her face are given,
  Roses of her natal morn.

Blush, red rose; blush, red rose;
  Blush, red rose, thro' the brief bright day;
Rosy with love the morning glows;
  Blush, red rose; blush, rose, while you may

  Rosy bloom the morning skies:
  Roses bloom in paradise.

Blush, red rose; blush, red rose; blush, red rose.

My love is like the winter rose:
  Snowy queen of winter roses;
Snowy-bright the moonlight glows
  Where my love in peace reposes.

Looked my love, my rose, to heaven,
When her spirit sought the skies;
Rosy-red the clouds of even
Bloomed above her dying eyes.

Sleep, white rose; sleep, white rose;
Sleep, white rose, thro' the long lone night;
Rosy with dawn the night will break;
Rosy again thou wilt wake to the light.

Rosy bloom the evening skies:
Roses bloom in paradise.

Sleep, white rose; sleep, white rose; sleep, white rose.

Felise.

Little maiden, wan and lonely,
  Little maiden, child of woe,
Sitting by the fading ingle,
  Dreaming dreams of long-ago.
Thinking of the vows he uttered,
  In the summer days gone by:
"Ah! to think that Death should part us!
  Oh! to think my love should die!"

  All the wintry welkin wells
  With the moan of funeral knells.

Little maiden, broken-hearted!
  Little maiden, wan and dead!
Doth thy spirit still remember
  All the loving words he said?
"Time may sever—Death may part us,
  But my true love cannot die!"
Oh! their happy, happy meeting
  In the love-land of the sky!

  All the summer welkin swells
  With the chime of marriage-bells.

Pilgrimage.

I ROAMED with the pilgrims of earth,
  Thro' the shade of the valley of tears,
And past by the home of my birth,
  And the regions of happier years;
Where the hearts that are weary and still,
  And the voices that echo no more,
Lie asleep, on the folds of the hill,
  By the verge of the sorrowful shore.

And, bursting the shadows of night,
  O'er the gloom that enshrouded the graves,
Dawn rose, in the fulness of light,
  And shone, like the sun on the waves.
And I said, "It were idle to weep,
  So peaceful their slumber appears;
For blest are the sleepers that sleep
  In the midst of a valley of tears."

My Darling's Dream.*

It was the dream of my darling,
She dreamed it yesternight,
When the moon, thro' the window streaming,
Filled her sweet breast with light.
Like the face of a far bright angel,
That deep on her sleep did beam,
And soft on the night-winds whispered,
"Sleep, sweet sister, and dream."

She dreamed that Love was a spirit,
And I was afar away;
But it flew to my soul, and told me
More than all words could say.
In my soul it nestled, and whispered,
"Wherever thy feet may roam,
My spirit—my Love—will follow;
In thy soul my Love hath its home!"

It was the dream of my darling,
She dreamed it yesternight,
Till the sun, thro' the window streaming,
Woke her sweet eyes with light.

---

* Set to music by Virginia Gabriel. London: Hutchings & Romer, Great Marlborough Street.

And often, at night, ere she sleepeth,
I look in her eyes' soft blue,
And bless the far bright angels
That my darling's dream is true.

Her Two Portraits.

Two portraits—both of her: one a girl's face,
  Taken at Stuttgart, five brief years ago;
And one a woman's, taken now: of grace
  Graver: but which is lovelier, who may know?

To some her woman's face may seem more fair;
  Lips fuller, cheek of rounder-moulded grace;
Perhaps to some she will seem lovelier
  As once, at Stuttgart, in her bright girl's face.

All things on earth change unto Time's wild will—
  A few bright years will blanch the brightest head:
But from the beauty that remaineth still
  Dear must have been the beauty that is dead.

Most dear, O maid, to all thy girl-compeers;
  And dear to each man's heart that beat for thee;
Who, for their old love's sake, will hold those years
  Sacred to thy dead beauty's memory.

And they—if now they saw thee—would they love
  Thee now, as then, tho' changed to statelier grace?
Would the grave woman their deep passion move
  As once, at Stuttgart, did the girl's bright face?

Who knows? I cannot tell. I only know
I wish those old bright years would bloom again,
And I with them, who, five brief years ago,
Loved thee, had been a lover in thy train.

For I can picture thee—a sweet girl-face,
Rosy with youth, and flushed with life's young hope,
A scarce-oped Irish rosebud, for a space
Transplanted under warmer skies to ope.

Warm German heavens, brighter far than ours;
There to unfold, and at late summer-fall
Return unto thy rosy sister-flowers,
To bloom and rule, queen-rose, among them all.

Yet scarce might thou return. Thy golden hair,
Love's golden web, love's own queen-spider thou—
Caught in it many a heart, which fain would there
Languish and die, wouldst thou, O queen, allow.

Him first thou bound—thy classic Grecian slave,
Free-born and proud, but slave alone to thee:
Trained to all grace that Athens gives or gave,
And each fair isle that gems the Grecian sea.

The statues of his stately palaces,
And sculptured splendours on his Triumph Hill,
Moulded his soul to all limbed loveliness;
But yet to him one form was lovelier still.

Aspasia, Aphrodite, Helene,
  Euphrosyne, Œnone, Thalia,
Pallas, Andromache, Agläie,
  Hebè, and Herè, and Lucilia.

All these he saw; on grace of such as these
  His soul looked daily, and his taste was toned:
Glories of women, bright earth-galaxies,
  Star-bosomed, sapphire-crownèd, emerald-zoned.

Freeborn, he cursed the slave; his proud control
  Spanned the broad seas, his kingdom wide as air;
But one bright smile enslaved his bondless soul,
  And his strong heart one strangling golden hair.

And him I see, who loved and followed her
  Down into lovely-womaned Italy,
Rapt on her face, and knowing, even there,
  She of all maids would still the fairest be.

A school-girl she—a sombre student he:
  But she, what erst he could not understand,
Taught him—his mistress—the still mystery
  Of soul to soul, and touching hand to hand.

Unseen, at Venice, in the silent moon,
  He saw, beneath the shadowed palace-wall,
Her bright hair gleaming in the calm lagune,
  And on each random ripple rise and fall.

He saw: when lo! where late her living face
Flushed the dark flood, to sound of muffled notes
Into their silent island burial-place
Past slowly by a funeral of boats.

"My hopes," he said, "so all my bright hopes pass
One after one into their silent grave!
My life is yon dark stream, and thou, alas,
Only a shining shadow on its wave!

Bright heaven itself thou art, that downward beams,
And on my soul lies sweetly mirrorèd;
A rainbow in life's tears, that, ghost-like, gleams
Promise of light when life's bright hopes are dead."

And I can hear the fence-club students sing
Soft Sappho psalms and songs of troubadour,
And the rough rafters of their club-house ring
Unto their wild impetuous praise of her.

"Fill up full bumpers, boys—no stint, no spare:
Who spares to drink, Hate curse him for a churl!
Drink, comrades, drink: our toast—*the fairest fair*,
Ergo bibamus, the bright Irish girl!

Full bumpers, boys: Hate curse the stinting churl!
Pass round the goblet, boys: no stint nor spare—
Ergo bibamus, the bright Irish girl;
Illæ cantemus, boys, the fairest fair!

One last full bumper to her bright blue eyes!
  Illam solam pulcherrimam amamus:
Our beauty's queen; but beauty fades and dies:
  Ergo, consocii, illæ nunc bibamus!"

Thus did they sing: but now—where are they now?
  Some here, some there, upon the wide world thrown;
Scattered, like leaves, when autumn breezes blow,
  And she, their summer and their rose, is gone.

Some here, some there, in lands afar, anear:
  Scattered, like leaves, upon the world's wide ways;
Souls that to souls might speak, if souls might hear,
  And breathe, from world to world, her deathless praise.

Perchance—who knows?—such power true love imparts—
  When far away mid throngs of stranger blood,
Her one known name might bind two unknown hearts,
  And sanctify their strange companionhood.

Her one known name their pure soul-bond might prove;
  "*Her* name: *thou* knewest her, then? she touched *thine* hand:"
So, reverencing, love each other, as we love
  Where angels touched, and hold it Holy Land.

So let us love her now for those old years,
No matter how face-changed she may be now;
E'en tho', to some, her bright girl-grace appears
To shine less glorious on her woman's brow.

Pluck flowers from each bright field she strayed among:
From Stuttgart's fields, where still her memory dwells;
And bind them round your hearts, to keep her young,
In wreaths of immortelles.

At Rest.

A MOON, thro' blackest cloud, her face
  Gleams thro' her wealth of raven hair;
She looks with peaceful dreamful eyes
  Into the twilight air.

A child of love and dreams, the clouds
  Before her eyes in splendour roll:
Perchance, the rainbow-radiant skies
  Paint pictures on her soul.

But one hour since my own pale face
  Looked, and was mirrored in those eyes;
But now, like souls at rest, they gaze
  Mute on the glorious skies.

A child of love and dreams, perchance
  The fleece-soft clouds on fleet sweet wings
Speak to her spirit, as they glide,
  In mystical whisperings.

Perchance. Who knows? I only know
  My own voice breathed in those loved ears
But one hour since—but now they list
  The music of the spheres!

See—her face glows! Some song, perchance,
Some cloud-song of delicious grace,
Hath flashed along her soul, to flush
Her spiritual face.

And in the lengthening sun, O God,
I see my own pale shadow creep
Even to her feet. There let my life,
A silent shadow, sleep.

M'Caw, Stevenson & Orr, Linenhall Works, Belfast.